In The Claims

Kindly enter the claim amendments, without prejudice, as set forth below. A complete listing of the claims is provided, with a parenthetical indication of the status of each claim, and markings to show current changes.

1) (withdrawn) A containment device for containment of melt between crystallizing rollers of a casting machine, wherein said crystallizing rollers are able to rotate around two substantially horizontal rotation axes, and are placed in positions such as to define between them a zone of minimal distance between the surfaces of said crystallising rollers and so to allow, in the space above said zone of minimal distance, the accumulation of a melt poured from a tundish or other means of distribution, each of the crystallizing rollers comprising one or more shoulder surfaces lying in a plane normal to the rotation axes of the crystallizing rollers, said containment device comprising, on each side of the crystallizing rollers

- a lateral containment plate able to fit tightly against at least part of each of said shoulder surfaces whereby it contains the melt;
- pressing means able to move the lateral containment plate so as to bring it close to and hold it tightly against the shoulder surfaces and/or remove the lateral containment plate from the shoulder surfaces;

wherein the lateral containment plate is fixed to the pressing means through an articulated joint, characterised by the fact that the articulated joint comprises a flexible connecting element able to sustain the lateral containment plate allowing a horizontal pivoting at least around a pivot axis horizontal and substantially normal to the rotation axes.

2) (currently amended) ~~The containment device according to claim 1,~~

A containment device for containment of melt between crystallizing rollers of a casting machine, wherein said crystallizing rollers are able to rotate around two substantially horizontal rotation axes, and are placed in positions such as to define between them a zone of minimal distance between the surfaces of said crystallising rollers and so to allow, in the space above said zone of minimal distance, the accumulation of a melt poured from a tundish or other means of

distribution, each of the crystallizing rollers comprising one or more shoulder surfaces lying in a plane normal to the rotation axes of the crystallizing rollers, said containment device comprising, on each side of the crystallizing rollers a lateral containment plate able to fit tightly against at least part of each of said shoulder surfaces whereby it contains the melt,

pressing means able to move the lateral containment plate so as to bring it close to and hold it tightly against the shoulder surfaces and remove the lateral containment plate from the shoulder surfaces:

wherein the lateral containment plate is fixed to the pressing means through an articulated joint, said articulated joint comprises a flexible connecting element able to sustain the lateral containment plate allowing a horizontal pivoting at least around a pivot axis horizontal and substantially normal to rotation axes;

wherein the flexible connecting element comprises a flexible tubular sleeve.

3) (previously presented) The containment device according to claim 2, wherein the tubular sleeve comprises one or more corrugated walls, like bellows, allowing the horizontal pivoting of the containment plate.

4) (previously presented) The containment device according to claim 3, wherein the tubular sleeve is connected to the pressing means and to the lateral containment plate whereby it supports the containment plate like a cantilever shelf.

5) (previously presented) The containment device according to claim 4, wherein the tubular sleeve is part of a passage for a cooling fluid for cooling the one or more corrugated walls.

6) (previously presented) The containment device according to claim 5, wherein it comprises an internal body placed inside the tubular sleeve, whereby it defines one or more internal spaces between the internal body and the corrugated walls, the spaces being part of said passage for a cooling fluid.

7) (currently amended) The containment device according to claim 6, wherein the internal

body comprises a lateral surfaces of such dimensions that each point of the lateral surface is substantially at a distance, from the closest point of the corrugated walls, when the tubular sleeve is in undeformed conditions, not less than a predefined minimum distance and wherein the tubular sleeve comprises one or more ribs surrounding transversal sections of the tubular sleeve, and one or more grooves ~~of closed annular shape~~ interposed between two of said circular ribs ~~of closed annular shape.~~

8) (currently amended) The containment device according to claim 7, wherein there are provided at least two ribs and the external surfaces of the internal body comprises one or more notched areas, each of which has a surface of shape ~~such~~ and dimensions such that each point of ~~its~~ it is found ~~points is~~ substantially at a distance, from the closest point of the internal walls of said undeformed flexible tubular sleeve, greater than ~~the~~ said predetermined minimal distance , so as to assist the flow of said cooling fluid from a cavity below a first of said circular ribs to the cavity below a second of said circular ribs closer to the outlet of the cooling circuit.

9) (previously presented) The containment device according to claim 8, wherein a plurality of notched areas is placed to form two groups, wherein one group is on a side of the external surfaces opposite to the side on which another group is.

10) (currently amended) The device according to claim 8, wherein ~~the one or more~~ each of the notched areas have a substantially oblong shape and are located substantially parallel to the closest one of said one or more grooves.

11) (previously presented) The containment device according to claim 10, wherein each of the internal spaces between the tubular sleeve and the internal body is closed by a wall close to one end of the tubular sleeve, and wherein the walls have one or more apertures, located around the tubular sleeve allowing the flow of the refrigerant liquid from the tubular sleeve .

12) (currently amended) The containment device according to claim 11, wherein the internal body and the tubular sleeve ~~(1)~~ have shape, dimensions and flexibility, that during

functioning do not come into contact with each other, even under the effect of the weight of said lateral containment plate and the support onto which said plate is fixed.

13) (previously presented) The containment device according to claim 12, wherein it comprises means for measuring the pressure of the cooling fluid inside the internal space, and means for controlling the pressure of the cooling fluid.

14) (currently amended) The containment device according to claim 13, wherein it comprises one or more mechanical abutments which perform the mechanical stop against which the plate of the support can rest, and limit~~ing~~ horizontal pivoting of the containment plate.

15) (withdrawn) A melt containment device between two crystallizing rollers of a continuous casting machine for metallic products, wherein the crystallizing rollers are able to rotate around two horizontal rotation axes, and are located in positions such as to define between them a zone of minimal distance and to allow, in the space above the zone of minimal distance, the accumulation of a melt poured from a tundish or from other distribution means, each of the crystallizing rollers comprising one or more shoulder surfaces lying on a plane normal to the rotation axes, the containment device comprising, on each side of the crystallizing rollers
- a lateral containment plate able to fit tightly against at least part of said shoulder surfaces of both crystallizing rollers whereby they contain the melt;
- pressing means able to press and remove the lateral containment plate towards and from the shoulder surfaces of both crystallizing rollers; the lateral containment plate is fixed to the pressing means through a plurality of mountings able to sustain the weight at least of said lateral containment plate, wherein each of said mountings is able to apply onto said lateral containment plate a force with at least a horizontal component, said plurality of supports being placed in a way such that at least one of said supports is positioned at a greater height than the other of said mountings.

16) (withdrawn) The device according to claim 15, wherein the mountings are at least three and are placed to form a triangle.

17) (withdrawn) The containment device according to claim 16, wherein the triangle has height equal to at least 20-30% of the height of the containment plate.

18) (withdrawn) The containment device according to claim 17, wherein the triangle has a width, according to a horizontal coordinate, equal to at least 20% of a width of the containment plate.

19) (withdrawn) The containment device according to claim 18, wherein each of the mountings comprises a cursor fixed onto a first support on which in turn is fixed the containment plate, and a tubular sleeve, fixed onto a second support fixed in turn onto the pressing means, said cursor being fixed to said sleeve in a way allowing it to move with respect to it.

20) (withdrawn) The containment device according to claim 19, wherein each of said mountings comprises a spring able to apply an at least horizontal force on said cursor.